



House of Representatives

Co-Chairs of Joint Committee on Ways and Means
State Rep Mary Nolan
State Sen Kurt Schrader
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

5 April 2007

Dear Senator Schrader & Representative Nolan,

Once again the Cascade divide is separating our state into two Oregons. Not just geographically, but also politically. This time the committee which makes all the decisions on how to spend an estimated \$48 billion dollars over the next two years has decided Eastern Oregon isn't worthy of a visit during the current "road hearings".

I understand residents in Pendleton, The Dalles, and Ontario will have access to video conferencing one day next week, but that is not really the same as being there in person. Besides, these outreach meetings are called "road" hearings not "video" hearings.

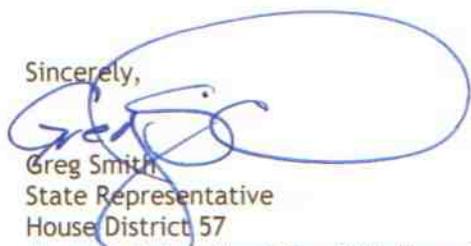
In the news release announcing these hearings, Senator Schrader said this was "an opportunity for regular Oregonians to make their voice heard as we work together to finalize a budget for all of Oregon." Note he didn't say "some of Oregon." In the same release, Representative Nolan pointed out how important it was to "get out of the Capitol and talk to Oregonians across the state". Last time I checked the state border doesn't end in Bend.

By my count residents in thirteen counties in Eastern Oregon will not have a road hearing hosted near them. That's nearly 40% of the counties in Oregon with a total population of more than 200,000 people simply ignored by the State Legislature's budget writing panel.

After serving on the Joint Ways and Means Committee for three terms and serving as a chair of the Transportation and Economic Development Subcommittee, I can appreciate that the committee is making an effort to listen to real Oregonians and I realize they can't stop in every city. However, once in a while it would be nice if Eastern Oregon wasn't treated like a second class citizen. I have dozens of constituents who take time off work to drive seven hours all the way over to Salem from as far away as Joseph. It shouldn't be too hard for a few legislators to make the trip the other way.

You may say I'm overreacting, but every time something like this happens it sends a message to the good people of Eastern Oregon that they're not worthy of our attention or our respect. Surveys show they already have a low opinion of state legislators, why give them another reason to criticize our intentions or our integrity.

Sincerely,



Greg Smith
State Representative
House District 57
Morrow, Union, Umatilla, & Wallowa Counties

CC: House Speaker Jeff Merkley
Senate President Peter Courtney
House Majority Leader Dave Hunt
House Republican Leader Wayne Scott
Senate Majority Leader Kate Brown
Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli
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